**‘Improving Lives – the Work, Health and Disability Green Paper**’

Published in October 2016 by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health.

**POSITIONING OF THE GREEN PAPER:**

The government highlighted the significant injustices facing people with a disability, many of which flow from lower employment rates, and that this injustice must be addressed.

“This government wants to help everyone to be able to enjoy the independence, security and good health that being in work can bring.

We know that the right type of work is good for an individual’s physical and mental health. Work can bring other benefits - introduce a sense of purpose, raise self-esteem, and allow people to build relationships.”

“We are committed to tackling the injustice of disability employment, so that all can share in the opportunities for health, wealth and wellbeing that the UK has t offer and where everyone has the chance to go as far as their talents will take them”

**THE GREEN PAPER IS CONSULTING ON:**

The government’s intention is to **work with others to change perceptions** and transform the culture around disability, health and work. Hence the **Launch of public consultation** to spark a proactive, wide-ranging and challenging conversation.

* + How to bring about a **shift in society’s attitudes** to make progress and achieve long-lasting change
	+ What the **role of government is in bringing about positive change to our attitudes** to disabled people and people with long-term health conditions

**GREEN PAPER ATTEMPTS TO ADDRESS THESE QUESTIONS:**

* **How big a role can we expect employers to play?**
* **How can work coaches provide better support** for disabled people and people with health conditions?
* **How can we improve a welfare system** that leaves people in the Support Group without any regular access to employment support?
* How can we **promote mental and physical health** and ensure that people have **timely access to the health and employment support**?
* How can we develop **better occupational health support** right across the health and work journey?
* What will it take to **reinforce work as a health outcome** in commissioning decisions and clinical practice?
* How can we ensure **good quality conversations** about health and work, and improve how fit notes work?
* How can we best **encourage, harness and spread innovation**?
* How can we build **a culture of high hopes and expectations** for what disabled people and people with long-term health conditions can achieve?

**EMPLOYER PROPOSALS**

* A balanced package to **encourage action and innovation** while also committing to **understanding what works** with a view to longer term reform
* Providing the **support needed to recruit and retain disabled people**
	+ - Announcing **Disability Confident Business Leaders Group** to increase engagement around disabled employment
		- Consulting on evolving current Government schemes and barriers to take up of Group Insurance Products
* **Helping employers manage sickness absence,** including consulting on **reform of Statutory Sick Pay**
* **Changing culture** to improve workplace wellbeing and retention of disabled employees:
	+ - Consulting on how: Government can best provide and publicise accessible information and guidance; to facilitate employer networks; to empower employees to manage their condition and help employers make adjustments
		- **Encouraging employers to collect data on disability and ill-health**
		- **Building the business case** for investing in supporting health and disability in the workplace.
		- Setting out where **the public sector is an exemplar**

**HEALTH SERVICES PROPOSALS**

* A balanced package to **encourage action and innovation** while also committing to **understanding what works** with a view to longer term reform
* Providing the **support needed to recruit and retain disabled people**
	+ - Announcing **Disability Confident Business Leaders Group** to increase engagement around disabled employment
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GREEN PAPER DECLARATIONS

* We want to ensure healthcare professionals recognise the value of a referral to Fit for Work for occupational health advice and return to work support and make referrals routine for eligible patients when appropriate.
* Therefore as part of the Green Paper consultation we want to understand people’s experience of Fit for Work in order to inform integrated provision for the future.
* To encourage use of Fit for Work, there is a need for a significant culture change among GPs and employers so that they can see the benefits of making greater use of Fit for Work. The Green Paper seeks views on how we might achieve this culture change.

GREEN PAPER ON FIT NOTE

**In the Green Paper the Government announced that it intends to review the current operation of the fit note including whether:**

* + Fit note certification should be extended from doctors in primary care and other settings to other healthcare professionals
	+ The current system meets the needs of its users – doctors and other healthcare professionals, employers, patients/claimants and the benefits system.

**GREEN PAPER OH/REHAB QUESTIONS**

* How can occupational health and related provision be organised so that it is accessible and tailored for all? Is this best delivered at work, through private provision, through the health system, or a combination?
* What kind of service design would deliver a position in which everyone who needs occupational health assessment and advice is referred as matter of course?
* What are the key barriers to increased take up of Group Income Protection – especially for SMEs?
* How/should the wider healthcare workforce be better used to build OH capacity and reduce some burden on GPs?
* How can we create a system/culture change so that everyone who is eligible for occupational health assessment and advice is referred as a matter of course?
* What has been your experience of the Fit for Work service, and how should this inform integrated provision for the future?
* How can we bring about better work-focussed conversations between an individual, healthcare professional, employer and Jobcentre Plus work coach, which focus on what work an individual *can* do, particularly during the early stages of an illness/developing condition?
* How can we embed work as a health outcome?
* Who is best placed to provide work and health information, make a judgement on fitness for work and provide sickness certification?
* How might GPs be encouraged/incentivised to make better use of the ‘may be fit to work option’ of the fit note?

What needs to change?

Who can change it?

What would a ‘good’ model look like?

FIT NOTE QUESTIONS

* Are doctors best placed to provide work and health information, make a judgement on fitness for work and provide sickness certification? If not, which other healthcare professionals do you think should play a role in this process ?
* Regarding the fit note certificate, what information should be captured to best help the individual, work coaches and employers better support a return to work or job retention?
* Is the current fit note the right vehicle to capture this information, or should we consider other ways to capture fitness for work and health information?
* Does the fit note meet the needs of employers, patients and healthcare professionals?
* Should SSP be reformed to enable a phased return to work with supportive conversations?